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Arms Limitation Lost

In 1969 when discussion of an arms limitations treaty began, the Soviets had 1,050 ICBM warheads. In 1985 at the conclusion of SALT they will have upwards of 12,000. This is four warheads for every county in the United States. In terms of missile throw-weight, the Soviets will continue their rapid increase from their current level of 11.3 million pounds to 15 million pounds by 1985, the treaty's expiration date. This will be *half again* the American throw-weight. The number of Soviet MIRVed missile launchers alone will almost double under the treaty period from the present level of about 700 to 1,200 in 1985.

The problem I suggest with the process is that—so far—it has required American negotiators to reach agreement with the Soviet Union in an area where there is no agreement. Their strategic buildup has been under way, as Secretary of Defense Harold Brown attests, for 15 years. It was well under way when formal SALT negotiations began. It has never ceased because the Soviets would not agree to do so.

As a result, more often than not, the actual negotiations in SALT have taken place within the American government. The process goes something as follows. The advocates of strategic arms limitations obtain agreement to have "talks"—that is the term—with the Soviets. In these talks they find the Soviet government has already agreed with its military to continue their nuclear buildup. (At the time of SALT I the Soviets had already decided to build the SS19, which they proceeded to do. This is one reason why our Minuteman force is now threatened.)

Accordingly a treaty is drafted that permits the increase in Soviet strategic forces the Soviets have already planned. Our negotiators return with this treaty, which the American military in all honor cannot support unless a corresponding increase in

American nuclear forces is also to take place. This is then agreed to on our side through a complex negotiation involving the White House, the State Department, the Defense Department and Congress.

The MX has become the price of SALT II. It is hard to describe the weapons system, for it changes every

day. At minimum it is complex. More seriously, it will require the Soviets to deploy some 8,000 warheads to neutralize it. (Two warheads per 20 possible sites for 200 missiles.)

Thus the United States joins the arms race the Soviets insist on. This is the ultimate irony. Without thinking, without so far as I can tell even noticing, *United States behavior in nuclear weapons has become basically imitative of Soviet behavior, because we have accepted the Soviet definition of "arms control."*

By the end of SALT II the United States will have four nuclear warheads for every *rayon*—the Soviet equivalent of our county—in the Soviet Union.

In the meantime, our conventional military forces grow relatively weaker with respect to the Soviets. In the kind of conflict one can imagine and could accept we are ever more likely to be overmastered. All because we wanted arms limitation and went about it badly.

The gods must weep.

I would hope we do not have to settle for this. I believe we can still negotiate a strategic arms limitation agreement that will limit arms.

Such hope as there exists for this is found in the "Joint Statement of Principles and Basic Guidelines for Subsequent Negotiations on the Limitation of Strategic Arms," an appendage to the treaty, though not a part of it that sets the agenda for the next round of SALT. This joint statement calls for a third SALT agreement that will bring about a "reduction in the numbers of strategic arms, as well as for their further qualitative limitation."

These are not instructions; even if they were, they are not binding. They reflect nothing more than the ideals with which SALT I and SALT II were entered upon—on our side. For it is an open secret that when the United States in Moscow, in March 1977, proposed a specific reduction in strategic arms of one-third, the Soviets rejected any such specific. Less known, but now more important, at Vienna in June the United States proposed to the Soviets that the joint statement on SALT III specifically call for a one-third reduction in strategic arms, and again the Soviets refused.

Worse. The United States entered into the negotiations for SALT I with a pronounced advantage in strategic weapons and those for SALT II with a sufficient advantage. The prospect is that the SALT III negotiations will

begin with the Soviets anticipating strategic supremacy by the end of the process. In such circumstances, to hold out hopes for any real reduction is self-deception or worse.

Our only hope is to obtain agreement for a SALT III reduction in arms *now* while the United States still retains the option to head off that shift in the strategic balance. If there are to be reductions in SALT III, their attainment must be written into SALT II.

I therefore propose an amendment to the treaty that will add a new provision to Article XIX of the text:

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The writer is a Democratic senator from New York. This article is excerpted from a statement to the Senate on Wednesday.

4. The Parties shall conclude, by December 31, 1981, an agreement which shall, as a result of the negotiations undertaken in accordance with the Joint Statement of Principles and Guidelines for Subsequent Negotiations on the Limitation of Strategic Arms agreed upon at Vienna on June 18, 1979, effect significant and substantial reductions in the numbers of strategic offensive arms, consistent with the requirement for the maintenance of essential strategic equivalence. This agreement shall enter into effect immediately upon the expiration of the present Treaty or sooner, as the Parties shall decide. If the Parties are unable to conclude such an agreement by December 31, 1981, the present Treaty shall terminate on that date.

Unlike other proposals that have been made to force the pace of the SALT III negotiations, this provision does not require undoing the present SALT II treaty. With respect to timing, it meshes with the expiration of the protocol to the treaty, which will itself automatically lapse on Dec. 31, 1981.

This much is certain: Our margin for error in SALT has disappeared. We must rescue the "process" from itself; otherwise, it will present us with ever more unappealing choices. We must recover for SALT the possibility of arms limitation and genuine arms reductions. This, so it seems to me, is the major contribution the Senate can make to the preservation of the SALT process that the president and others seek. We must at least make the effort.